

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 06259 01 OF 03 111811Z

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ACTION OES-05

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TRSE-00 /086 W

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R 111759Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7450

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 06259

DEPT FOR OES/SCI

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TGEN

SUBJECT: FRENCH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DECLARED A
NATIONAL PRIORITY: AIGRAIN ASKED TO PROPOSE MEANS TO
MAKE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES MORE EFFECTIVE

1. THE DEVELOPMENT AND EXPLOITATION OF RESEARCH IN
FRANCE IS NOW A MAJOR NATIONAL PRIORITY, DECLARED PRES-
IDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING IN A SPECIAL COUNCIL ON GUIDANCE
FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH HELD 28 FEB
AT THE ELYSEE PALACE. IT IS HIS DESIRE THAT FUTURE DI-
RECTIONS OF RESEARCH LEAD TO A MUCH CLOSER HARMONY
BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND THE OTHER MAJOR EN-
DEAVORS OF FRANCE.

2. TOWARD ATTAINING THIS OBJECTIVE, THE COUNCIL'S COM-
MUNIQUE REPORTED, (A) FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH WILL
GROW AT A RATE GREATER THAN THE AVERAGE GROWTH RATE FOR
OVERALL GOVT EXPENDITURES FOR CAPITAL ITEMS, AND (B)
PRIVATE INDUSTRIES WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO INCREASE THEIR
SUPPORT OF RESEARCH.

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PAGE 02 PARIS 06259 01 OF 03 111811Z

3. AS ANOTHER STEP IN HIS REVIEW OF MAJOR SECTORS OF

THE FRENCH GOVT, SUCH AS HE HAS CONDUCTED WITH THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, GISCARD CHAIRED THIS SPECIAL COUNCIL TO EXAMINE A NUMBER OF POLICY GUIDELINES AND ACTIONS PROPOSED BY DGRST'S (DELEGATION GENERALE A LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE ET TECHNIQUE) PROF. HUBERT CURIEN. IN ADDITION TO THE PRESIDENT, THE COUNCIL INCLUDED PRIME MINISTER JACQUES CHIRAC; FINANCE MINISTER FOURCADE; MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH D'ORNANO; COORDINATOR OF THE PLAN RIPERT; SECRETARY OF STATE FOR UNIVERSITIES (AND THE CNRS--CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE) SOISSON; AND CURIEN.

4. CURIEN TOLD EMBASSY SCICON ON 5 MARCH THAT PRACTICALLY ALL OF PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WERE ACCEPTED AND PROMULGATED BY THE COUNCIL. IN ADDITION TO THOSE IN PARAS 1 & 2 ABOVE, THESE WERE:

A) FRANCE SHOULD RANK AMONG THE FIRST OF THE COUNTRIES OF ITS SIZE IN THE VOLUME AND QUALITY OF ITS RESEARCH.

B) GREATEST SUPPORT WILL BE GIVEN TO RESEARCH, BOTH BASIC AND APPLIED, WHICH HAS THE MOST PROMISE FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF EXPORTS AND/OR THE ENHANCEMENT OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE AREAS OF ENERGY OR RAW MATERIALS SUPPLIES.

C) THE RATE OF INCREASES OF MONEY GIVEN TO BASIC RESEARCH WILL BE AT LEAST EQUAL TO THAT ASSIGNED TO RESEARCH IN GENERAL.

D) TO ASSURE IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN THE COORDINATION

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PAGE 01 PARIS 06259 02 OF 03 111831Z

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ACTION OES-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NSF-02 FEAE-00 EB-07 CIAE-00

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R 111759Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7451

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 06259

OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CERTAIN MINISTERIES,
COORDINATING GROUPS OF RESEARCHERS WILL BE ESTABLISHED
WITHIN THESE MINISTERIES.

E) SEVERAL NEW POSITIONS FOR RECENT GRADUATE SCIENTISTS
WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE ON A CONTINUING AND REGULAR
BASIS AND METHODS WILL BE DEVELOPED TO IMPROVE THE
JOB-MOBILITY OF RESEARCHERS.

F) THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY IS URGED AND INVITED TO
PARTICIPATE MORE CLOSELY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOVT RE-
SEARCH POLICY. TOWARD THAT END, THE ROLE AND COMPOSITION
OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNICAL RESEARCH (WHICH ADVISES THE GOVT ON RESEARCH
BUDGETING) IS TO BE REDEFINED AND BROADENED TO INCLUDE
A CERTAIN NUMBER OF MEMBERS DRAWN FROM RESEARCH ORGANI-
ZATIONS AND SCIENTISTS WILL BE APPOINTED TO THE SOCIAL
AND ECONOMIC COUNCILS.

G) FURTHER, THE FORMER DELEGATE GENERAL OF THE
DGRST, PROF PIERRE AIGRAIN, IS CHARGED BY THE PRESIDENT

OF THE REPUBLIC TO GUIDE A COMMISSION OF 5 INCLUDING
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PAGE 02 PARIS 06259 02 OF 03 111831Z

THE PAST AND PRESENT PRESIDENTS OF THE
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, M. LALOY OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, AND CAHEN-SALVADOR, CONSEIL D'ETAT, IN DE-
FINING, WITHIN 3 MONTHS' TIME, A MORE EFFECTIVE ROLE
FOR THE FRENCH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES. IN THE PRESIDENT'S
LETTER OF INSTRUCTION TO AIGRAIN, HE STATES THAT,
"AT A TIME WHEN FRENCH SOCIETY MANIFESTS A PROFOUND
DESIRE FOR CHANGE, I DESIRE THAT THE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
COMMUNITY FIND IN THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AN ACTIVE
AND MODERN SPOKESMAN, AND THAT THE GOVT WOULD THUS BE
ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM THE ADVICE OF THIS INSTITUTION
IN ALL OF THE DOMAINS OF CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE."
(INFORMAL TRANSLATION)

(COMMENT: THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1666 AND HAS EVOLVED, AFTER HAVING HAD A HIGHLY IRREGULAR IMPACT ON GOVT POLICY, TO NOW BEING A CLUB OF REKNOWNED SCHOLARLY GENTLEMEN "WHO HAVE A TENDENCY TO RESTRICT THEMSELVES TO THEIR IVORY TOWER." THE AVERAGE AGE OF ITS MEMBERS RANGES FROM 74 TO 75. A NUMBER OF ITS MATHEMATICIANS ARE IN THEIR 90'S END OF COMMENT.)

5. A SECOND COUNCIL ON R & D GUIDANCE WILL BE CONVENED BY EARLY SUMMER 1975, AT WHICH TIME GOVT RESEARCH AGENCIES ARE TO PRESENT THEIR PLANS FOR EXECUTING THE POLICY GUIDELINES GIVEN AT THIS FIRST COUNCIL.

6. COMMENT: WE VIEW AS SIGNIFICANT THAT APPARENTLY NEITHER M. CURIEN PROPOSED NOR THE PRESIDENT ENDORSED A STATEMENT THAT A CERTAIN FRACTION OF THE GNP OR ANY OTHER CONCRETE INDICATOR, WOULD BE DEDICATED TO RESEARCH. THERE WAS NO STATEMENT THAT GREATER EMPHASIS WOULD BE GIVEN TO R & D WITH RESPECT TO THE OTHER ECONOMIC OBLIGATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

IN ONE SENSE THE R & D COMMUNITY IS BEING PUT ON NOTICE: TO PARTICIPATE MORE AND CONTRIBUTE MORE TO SCIENCE POLICY FORMULATION AND EXECUTION TOWARD MEETING PRESSING CURRENT NATIONAL NEEDS SUCH AS IN ENERGY, ENHANCING EXPORTS AND ASSURING ADEQUATE SUPPLIES
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PAGE 03 PARIS 06259 02 OF 03 111831Z

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PAGE 01 PARIS 06259 03 OF 03 111812Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7452

UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 06259

OF RAW MATERIALS. WE SEE NOTHING IN THE OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL WHICH WOULD CONTRADICT AN INTERPRETATION THAT AT BEST ONLY A REAPPORTIONMENT OF R & D FUNDS, RATHER THAN AN ENLARGEMENT, IS ENVISAGED.

AS FAR AS CHANGING THE SCIENTIFIC PERSONNEL SITUATION, SUCH AS ENHANCING MOBILITY AND PROVIDING NEW POSITIONS FOR NEWLY PRODUCED SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCH ENGINEERS, THE GOVT WILL BE CONSTRAINED BY STRONG EMPIRE-PROTECTING TENDENCIES OF RESEARCH MANAGERS AND THE VOCAL AND INFLUENTIAL TECHNICIAN AND SCIENTIST UNIONS.

THE FEB 28 COUNCIL COULD BE CONSIDERED AS PART OF A GENERAL AND DESIRABLE EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE PRESIDENT TO SHOW THAT HE HAS REEXAMINED YET ANOTHER MAJOR SECTOR OF FRENCH LIFE AND HAS ESTABLISHED NEW CONSTRUCTIVE DIRECTIONS. A LESS TENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE AFTER THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 1975, WHEN WE WILL SEE WHAT CONCRETE STEPS ARE PROPOSED FOR EXECUTING THE NEW GUIDELINES.
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